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ABSTRACT

In the first part of the paper, the author discusses his observation that teachers perceive any form of theorizing in schools to be intellectually dependent on educational researchers. Teachers assume that their access to educational theories depends on a group external to themselves and that theory has little practical value in the classroom. In the second part of the paper, the author discusses four existing research paradigms currently employed in the study of the process of schooling in society--functionalist, phenomenological, action-research, and social reproductionist. The functionalist model of systems analysis is attractive to many because it views social processes as self-regulating systems and appears to provide the foundation for a truly empirical-analytic science of society, free of value bias. In Alfred Schutz's phenomenological analysis model, social processes are viewed as the constructions of autonomous individuals. Habermas' educational action-research model is based on the assumption that social processes rely on the existence of subjectively shared rules of interpretation for translating social norms and values. Social reproductionist theory attempts to show that subjective meanings expressed in social action are biased by their economic function. The action-research model best supports educational research as a science aimed at improving schooling, thus maximizing the theoretician practitioner relationship. (LH)

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PARADIGMS OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND THEORIES OF SCHOOLING

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1. PARADIGMS OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND THEORIES OF SCHOOLING

by
John Elliott

1. The 'Assumption of Intellectual Dependence'

If I asked a teacher, "What theories of schooling are you aware of?", say when (s)he is being interviewed for a place on a Masters Course in Education, what sort of answer would I get? What about, "I'm afraid I've been so busy teaching and doing other things in school over the years that I just haven't had time to read much?" Or, "I took the Open University course on schooling and society a few years ago and found it very stimulating, you know, the idea that we are simply as teachers reproducing the class system." Or, "I've just been on a management course run by the local poly. They think schools should state their goals more precisely and say how various 'functional groups', I think that was the word they used, you know subject departments and pastoral care, are expected to contribute to their achievement."

All of these fictional, but not I think improbable responses assume that theories of schooling originate from outside 'schools' in the minds of academics in Institutions of Higher Education, and that access to them is secured through books or courses. I wouldn't expect, and would be mildly surprised by, such responses as, "Well in our school a group of us have developed a theory to explain what we are doing in school." Or, "I am aware of a range of theories held by the teachers in my school and they often conflict. For example, ..."

Of course, the sophisticated reader will argue that the hypothetical setting of an academic in higher education interviewing a schoolteacher is bound to reproduce the kinds of answers I have cited. Suppose we transpose the interview context into a school itself and imagine a head of a subject department asking this question to a candidate for a teaching post. I would anticipate little difference in response. The candidate would sit there thinking "(s)he must have been on a course and wants to know whether I have."

If these conjectures are credible then what conclusions might one draw from them? It would certainly be wrong to conclude that teachers don't develop their own ideas of schooling. It is simply that they wouldn't describe these ideas as 'theories'. It would also be wrong to conclude that teachers don't use or apply theories, e.g. when producing accounts of their practices for each other, their pupils, and such lay groups as parents and governors. They may use or apply them without generating or developing what is used or applied. The conclusions one might draw are as follows: Since schoolteachers: (1) don't have a construct of 'theory' which enables them to see their schools as centres of theory construction and development,
(2) view the location of theory construction and development to reside in the kind of higher education institutions which qualified them to teach,
(3) view their access to theory to be dependent upon those working in the higher education sector,
they will see any form of theorising in schools to be <u>intellectually dependent</u> on specialist researchers in universities and colleges.

This assumption of dependence constitutes the 'hidden curriculum' of much award bearing teacher education. Take most lectures on B.Ed or Masters courses in education and one will tend to find constant references to the research and writings of academic theorists. It matters little whether the lectures are given by academics or a student on the course. The expectation

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is that it will be a scholarly exposition/critique of the work of academics. Even when the course members themselves are experienced practitioners in schools, courses will rarely be based on peer teaching; on a sharing of teachers' ideas and free and open dialogue about them. The booklists provided on these courses reflect this 'hidden curriculum' of intellectual dependency. Look at the references and it will be difficult to find something written by a teacher among them.

I would argue that the 'hidden curriculum' of teacher education is far more powerful than the formal curriculum. Many student teachers in initial training will remain sceptical or even cynical about the practical value of the theories they learn. Once they qualify, the theories cease to be of use. Their value lies in their potential for acquiring the qualified status of teacher and not in their potential as structures for thinking about teaching and schooling. But the 'hidden curriculum' - the assumption of intellectual dependence - is carried through into the workplace. Teachers may cease to use the theories they were taught, but they will continue to assume that such theories are the cultural property of higher education and that schools are not appropriate places for theory development. Teacher 'theoreticians', those who look to academic theorists as a reference group, and the teacher 'cynics', those who reject the relevance of theory to practice, all tend to share this assumption.

Underlying the 'assumption of intellectual dependence' is a doctrine of theoretical reasoning grounded in a certain interpretation of the idea of 'objectivity'. It is the doctrine that theoretical reasoning liberates people from mental bias and prejudice by comprehending or contemplating a reality which exists external to their minds. This doctrine rests on the value of 'objectivity', i.e. of a view of reality which is free from mental bias and prejudice exerted by people's practical preferences, wants and purposes. But it interprets this value in a certain way. Only by coming to fully comprehend or contemplate entities which exist 'externally' to one's mind can one become free from bias. This interpretation, universalised, results in the proposition that 'objective' inquiry is the study of what exists externally to all minds. The doctrine cited resolves the problem of objectivity by separating the activity of theoretical reasoning from activities orientated to realising change in a practical situation.

Such a doctrine legitimates 'the assumption of intellectual dependence' in the minds of teachers. It is because they share this doctrine with specialist researchers that they assume their access to theories of schooling depends on a group external to themselves. The options the doctrine presents them with is either to apply theory developed elsewhere to their practice, or to reject the notion that theory can be applied to practice. In taking the first option teachers' practical reasoning becomes dependent on the theoretical reasoning of specialist theorists. This 'dependency' relation can occur at two points. First, in relationship to practical ends-in-view. It is the educational philosopher's job to clarify the educational ideals which teachers hold as aims of schooling. Secondly, in relationship to practical means. It is the educational scientist's job to discover connections between actions and consequences in education as a basis for generating prescriptive rules governing choice of methods.

In these ways theoretical reasoning about the realms of ends and means is believed to inform practical judgement. Indeed, teachers who apply theory to their practice on the basis of such assumptions would assess the objectivity of their practical judgements by the extent to which their views of ends and

means conformed to those established by specialist educational theorists. They would see no way of 'internally validating' their practical judgements. Such a stance also presupposes a logical separation between ends and means so that it becomes possible to reflect about the former quite independently of the latter, and about the latter purely instrumentally. Questions about means to ends may presuppose answers to ethical questions about the nature of ends but do not in themselves involve theorising about values. In themselves they are value-neutral technical questions about the most 'effective' and 'efficient' methods. In logically separating the realm of ends from the realm of means questions about values are regarded as quite logically distinct from questions about processes.

Teachers' who base their practical reasoning on external theory project a self-understanding of themselves as technologists, who apply theory to practice in order to make the schooling process more efficient and effective in maximising educational goals.

Those teachers who deny the relevance of theory to educational practice view the latter as a matter of intuitive 'know-how', acquired through experience. Teaching on this view is not so much a technology in which theory is applied to practice as a craft.

2. Research Paradigms and the Process of Schooling

In this section I want to examine four existing research paradigms currently employed in the study of the process of schooling, in terms of their presuppositions about the relationship between educational theorising and practice in schools. I shall use the term 'paradigm', following Kuhn (1962), to describe a form of inquiry which is characterised by a particular way of conceptualising the phenomena it studies, and thereby generates a set of problems and research strategies for resolving them, which is quite distinctive. The four paradigms can be described in terms of the basic perspectives they adopt.

(1) Systems Analysis

Systems analysis is a highly developed form of functional analysis which views social processes as self-regulating systems. McCarthy (1978) traces the development of this model from early anthropological research. He cites Malinowski's (1926) characterization of functional analysis as the:

> "explanation of ... facts ... by the part they play within the integral system of culture, by the manner in which they are related to each other within the system, and by the manner in which this system is related to the physical surroundings."

According to McCarthy, the idea of 'function' was linked to that of 'structure' by Radcliffe-Brown (1952):

> "If we consider any recurrent part of the life-process (of an organism), such as respiration, digestion, etc., its function is the part it plays in, the contribution it makes to, the life of the organism as a whole ... We may note that the function of a recurrent physiological process is thus a correspondence between it and the needs

> (i.e. necessary conditions of existence) of the organism ... To turn from organic life to social life, if we examine such a community as an African or Australian tribe we can recognise the existence of a social structure. Individual human beings, the essential units in this instance, are connected by a definite set of social relations into an integrated whole. The continuity of the social structure, like that of an organic structure is maintained by the process of social life, which consists of the activities and interactions of the individual human beings and of the organised groups into which they are united. The social life of the community is here defined as the functioning of the social structure. The function of any recurrent activity ... is the part it plays in the social life as a whole and therefore the contribution it makes to the maintenance of structural continuity."

This quotation from Radcliffe-Brown makes quite explicit the biological analogies underlying his structural-functionalism. Social processes were conceived as analogous to biological processes and could therefore be explained in terms of their functions in maintaining the structures which constitute an organic system, and which are essential for its survival. As McCarthy points out the study of small scale primitive societies made this biological model of social processes very credible. The "boundaries" of the social systems studied were easily identifiable, their "structures" were stable, social life within them exhibited a high degree of "social integration", and "survival" could reasonably be assumed to be their overall goal. But this model of society as a self-regulating system became less plausible when applied to "larger, less isolated, and rapidly changing societies, comprising a number of subgroups often hostile to one another".

Structural-functionalism is attractive to many because it appears to provide the foundations for a truly empirical-analytic science of society free of value-bias. By analysing social processes in terms of their 'Systems maintenance' functions, it appears to provide causal explanations for them. And as Merton (1949) argued through his distinction between 'manifest' and 'latent' functions (see McCarthy, 1978, Ch. 3.5) such explanations need not correspond with the way in which practitioners explain their actions. The functions their actions satisfy may be quite unintended, and even if they are, they can be empirically determined quite independently of the analysts' knowledge of those intentions. Structural-functional explanations of social processes, in by-passing the subjective intentions, wants, and preferences of social practitioners, appeared to conform to the notion of objectivity outlined in the previous section.

But all this assumes that it is possible to clearly identify the systems maintenance functions of social processes. With respect to biological processes this is a relatively simple matter. A biological system is maintained when the processes which constitute it function to maintain those structures which are necessary for its continual survival. It is the achievement of an empirically determinable goal-state (i.e. physical survival) which enables the biologist to generate valid empirical explanations of biological processes. But as Habermas has pointed out:

> "Unlike the reproduction of organic life, the reproduction of social life is not fixed by values

> that can be grasped descriptively. Physical survival is a necessary, but by no means a sufficient condition for the maintenance of social systems ... The difficulty is obvious - the standards of historical life and survival are dependent on the interpretations that obtain in given social systems." (See McCarthy 1978, Ch. 3.5)

What Habermas is claiming is that there is no way of determining the goal-states of a social system independently of the inter-subjectively agreed values which give individuals within it their sense of social identity; of being integrated into a worthwhile form of social life. Thus the malfunctioning of social processes can only be identified in terms of the crisis of social identity subjectively experienced by those who participate in and are affected by them. In the first chapter of Legitimation Crisis (1976) Habermas claims:

> "... only when members of a society experience structural alterations as critical for continued existence and feel their social identity threatened can we speak of crisis. Disturbances of system integration endanger continued existence only to the extent that social integration is at stake, that is, when the consensual foundations of normative structures are so impaired that the society becomes anomic. Crisis states assume the form of a disintegration of social institutions."

According to Habermas there is no 'objective' way of validating functional explanations independently of participants self-understandings of social processes and their consequences.

The difficulties associated with objectively determining the goal states and values of social systems led to the development of a form of systems analysis which McCarthy (1978, Ch. 3.5) has called normative-analytic inquiry. Here the goals of the system are not so much discovered as stated by the investigator, usually after discussion with the participants. The functional perspective is then employed to identify the processes which are necessary for the achievement of the stated goals. Providing the goals are stated in measurable quantities, it is possible for the investigator to discover causal or correlational connections between process variables and the achievement of goal-states. This normative-analytic type of systems analysis is popular amongst organisational and management theorists, and is currently being applied to the study of schooling under the general label of 'School effectiveness research'. The most notable example of such research in the U.K. is that of Rutter et al. (1979).

Although the normative-analytic approach constitutes a degree of compromise with respect to the aspiration to ground an empirical-analytic social science in a systems model of society, it still reflects certain assumptions underlying this aspiration. Firstly, that an objective science separates questions of fact from questions of value. Although the normative-analytic approach rests on statements of value, they are conceived as statements about the extrinsic end-states of social processes and not statements about processes in themselves. The value or significance of social processes is entirely instrumental, residing in their effectiveness at producing desired end-states. They have no intrinsic value or significance. This leaves room for empirical researchers to 'objectively' determine the meaning or significance of social processes quite independently of their own, or practitioners

presumptions concerning their value. The 'objective' foundations of an empirical science are thus preserved with the implication that theory construction - the discovery of causal connections - can proceed quite independently of the subjective beliefs and preferences practitioners hold with respect to the social processes in which they are engaged.

The discovery of causal connections can be employed in resolving 'steering problems' within systems, that is, problems of ensuring that the social processes are structured in ways which maximise the achievement of the desired end-states. Systems models normally imply a special 'steering unit' within any system, with the special function of integrating the other units or elements to maximise the desired end-states. Hence their attractiveness as a scientific foundation for the management of social organisations like schools. The causal knowledge generated by systems analysis can be translated by managers into technical knowledge; that is, rules which prescribe what constitutes correctly functioning processes in different parts of the system. In order to ensure correctly functioning processes it is only necessary for those responsible for systems management to have direct access to the findings of systems research. Such findings only need to be indirectly accessible to practitioners at other levels, in the form of technical rules prescribed by management.

Perhaps this explains the current tendency on the part of central and local government to give priority in the inservice training of teachers to courses in management. If scientific research into schooling is best conceived in terms of systems models, then it is only managers and potential managers who need access to it. All the chalk face teachers require is school-based inservice training in the technical competencies required to apply the rules skilfully. Systems analysis conceptualises processes of schooling from a managerial perspective. As Habermas (1976, Ch. 1) argues: "... systems theory ... conceptualises every social system from the point of view of its control centre."

As the educational managers come to utilise systems research more and more as a means of rationalising processes of schooling, the traditional craft wisdom of teachers will be rendered more and more obsolete by technical knowledge. The process of schooling will be less understood as an expression of intuitive know-how acquired through experience, and more as outcomes of rational decisions based on scientific knowledge. Control over the process of schooling will tend to pass from the classroom teachers to a managerial élite.

The systems model of social processes can be understood as a way of rationalising the growth of administrative control over social processes and decreasing the autonomy exercised by those directly involved in them. The very notion of objectivity which underlies it is tautly biased against 'worker participation' in decisions concerning what constitute worthwhile social processes, and in favour of maximising control through an administrative élite. One might therefore view systems models of social science as historically situated; as a reflection of the increasing bureaucratisation of human relations in our social institutions.

3. Phenomenological Analysis

The 'phenomenological' paradigm of social research stands in marked contrast to functional analysis. Its father-figure, Alfred Schutz, viewed social

processes as originating in the 'subjective intentionality' of those who participate in them.

In acting towards each other human beings signify their mental and emotional states to each other; their beliefs, understandings, and evaluations concerning their social situation. Schutz therefore argued that social processes couldn't simply be observed and measured. As the constructions of individuals interacting together, they needed to be interpreted by understanding them from the point of view of the 'lived experience' of those involved. It is only when this interpretative foundation has been provided that social researchers can proceed to validly employ their second-order constructs to explain social processes and predict their consequences.

> "The postulate of subjective interpretation has to be understood in the sense that all scientific explanations of the social can, and for certain purposes must, reflect the subjective meaning of the actions of human beings from which social reality originates." (Schutz 1962)

In so doing such explanations can never be strictly causal, since human re-actions to a situation, to the pressures which arise out of it, are always mediated through beliefs, understandings and evaluations of it. It is always possible for people to change and modify their 'definition of the situation' and subsequently their re-actions to it. Therefore social structures - roles, institutions, norms and traditions - are always open to re-interpretation and therefore reconstruction by those who participate in them. As explanations for the behaviour of individuals and groups they do not determine behaviours in a strictly causal sense. The phenomenological paradigm is grounded in the presupposition that social processes stem from the autonomous activity of individuals.

Schutz's attempt to create a foundation for social science in phenomenological analysis contains an ambiguity if we explore it in the light of the doctrine of theoretical reasoning outlined in the first section. In establishing the foundation, social processes cannot simply be observed and described independently of practitioners' subjective meanings. Their commonsense knowledge of the world has to be explicated and comprehended if their activities are to be validly described. Looked at in the light of the particular notion of 'objectivity' which underpins the doctrine of theoretical reasoning I cited, Schutz's phenomenology appears to undermine it and imply that there is no objective foundation, in this sense, for the study of social processes. But in my view he fails to follow a possible implication of this claim; namely, that the study of social processes should treat the beliefs, understandings, and evaluations of participants as the framework for social research, regardless of the fact that this contradicts a now obsolete idea of objectivity. What I am suggesting is that the phenomenological perspective might imply a research stance which adopts the action perspective of the participants, and aims to improve their social activities by helping them to assess, and if necessary revise, their everyday beliefs, understandings, and evaluations of the social situations they face.

If this implication could be derived from phenomenology, the doctrine of theoretical reasoning I sketched would have to go and make way for a conception of social practitioners as theorists, and of social research as an activity which aims to help them improve the quality of their social action by testing and developing their everyday 'theories' of social life.

But Schutz does not derive such a possibility partly because he fails to let go of the empiricist notion of objectivity altogether. Participants' everyday interpretations of their social world are not ascribed the status of theories. Researchers need to comprehend them as the foundation for their inquiries but then need to categorise them in terms of second-order constructs which are unique to social scientists. Theory and theorising belong at this second-order level of social inquiry.

In demarcating a second-order level of inquiry Schutz reveals that he remains trapped in many of the assumptions which underpin an empirical-analytic view of social inquiry. Although the phenomenological paradigm is a radical departure in many respects from the functionalist paradigm of systems analysis, it does not in the last resort entirely free itself of the notion of objectivity which underpins the latter. And the result is that the phenomenological paradigm shares with the systems paradigm a not dissimilar view of the relationship between theorising and social practice. The former remains the specialist activity of the social scientist.

A further ambiguity in Schutz's work may serve to explain why his phenomenological paradigm reserves theory construction as a specialised second-order activity. If social action is symbolic, in the sense that it signifies practitioners' subjective meanings - 'lived experience 'of the social world - to each other, then it must be possible for people to understand each other's meanings. And this 'lived experience' is communicable and therefore publicly accessible and shareable.

But as McCarthy (1978, Ch. 3.2) points out, Schutz:

> "On the one hand ... stresses the fact that we experience the world we live in not as a private world but as an intersubjective one - a world common to us all. On the other hand, he often writes as if this shared world originates in the subjective intentions of individual actors."

McCarthy illustrates his last point with the following quotation from Schutz (1962):

> "It is the insight of the actor into the dependencies of the motives and goals of his actions upon his biographically determined situation which social scientists have in mind when speaking of the subjective meaning which the actor "bestows upon" or "connects with" his action ..."

What Schutz appears to be saying here is that the way people experience social situations, their subjective interpretations of them, depend on their personal and idiosyncratic life histories. It then follows that shared understandings are 'negotiated subjectivities'. A common world is essentially constructed out of different private worlds through social interaction.

This model of the relationship between subjective experience and intersubjective social structures has resulted in numerous micro-analyses aimed at elucidating the processes by which individuals construct structures of social interaction - roles and norms - from their private biographical situations. In the field of schooling there are an increasing number of studies which seek to comprehend teachers interpretations of their roles and tasks in terms of their

personal and career histories (see Pinar 1981, Ingvarsson 1980, Ebbutt 1982). It is characteristic of such approaches that they emphasise the analysis of individual interpretations of institutional structures in contrast to systems approaches which focus on the analysis of the structures in themselves.

Whereas a systems approach to processes of schooling will tend to embody an ideal of teachers as technical operatives competently maintaining systems functions, a Schutzian phenomenology will tend to view teachers as craftspersons drawing on tacit commonsense 'knowledge', acquired through experience in the context of their personal life and career histories. The radical subjectivism of the model explains why it is so easy for those who subscribe to it to reserve 'theory' for the second-order constructs of specialist social scientists. For theories presuppose the existence of public criteria against which they can be tested. If subjective interpretations of social situations are merely relative to people's personal experiences of life then there can be no objective criteria against which their validity can be assessed.

Although the phenomenological model outlined views social processes as the constructions of autonomous individuals, its application to the study of schooling may well tend to enhance bureaucratic manipulation of individuals' motives, with a consequent decrease in their freedom of judgement and action. In making explicit the motivational basis for teachers' conduct in schools, phenomenological studies tend to enhance the power of the administrative system to manipulate it. In which case systems and phenomenological research into schooling are, in practice, equally utilisable by an administrative élite responsible for steering 'the system'.

Perhaps this explains why bureaucratic agencies in education continue to sponsor 'soft' as well as 'hard'research. It is certainly difficult to see how phenomenological analysis of the Schutzian variety could be utilized directly by teachers to strengthen their capacity for autonomous action in the face of attempts at bureaucratic manipulation. Its claim that people's subjective interpretations of social situations are relative to their biographical situation leaves little room for any diagnosis of human activities which would indicate how practitioners might improve them. The 'manifest' function of this type of analysis is the development of a specialised social science. But as I have indicated, its 'latent' function might well be to facilitate the bureaucratisation of schooling.

4. Action-Research

Habermas, drawing on ideas from G.H. Mead and Linguist Philosophy, has mounted a powerful critique of the assumption that communicative interaction is grounded in the private consciousness of individuals. If people are to communicate their experience of the social world to each other, then they must already share certain concepts or rules for interpreting that world, and these in turn will rest upon shared values. For Habermas (1968, 1973) communicative interaction is 'governed by binding consensual norms, which define reciprocal expectations about behaviour'. These norms are embodied in social institutions and are presupposed in descriptions of institutional practices. Therefore, in the realm of communicative interaction people's accounts of human conduct are not value-free but 'normative-descriptive'.

I find these points are best illustrated by two examples based on Searle's analysis of speech acts. Let's explore what is involved when someone makes an 'Assertion' (see Elliott 1980).

When a person 'asserts' that 'P is true', (s)he in doing so places him or herself under an obligation to speak the truth and therefore tacitly implies that (s)he ought to speak the truth. Again, when a person 'advises' H (s)he places him or herself under an obligation to inform H about actions which will benefit H. And this presupposes that (s)he believes (s)he ought to inform others of actions that will benefit them.

Thus communicative acts like 'making assertions' and 'giving advice' certainly express subjective intentions - a belief that something is true, and a belief that something will benefit another - but these intentions can only be expressed and understood against a background of shared values, i.e. that one ought to speak the truth and act benevolently towards others. And the possibility of acting in accordance with such values presupposes shared concepts or rules specifying what is to count as 'a true statement' or 'good advice'. The existence of inter-subjectively shared rules for translating values into action would appear to make the public assessment of people's actions towards each other and the subjective meanings they express possible. Later, in the next chapter, I shall refer to such rule systems as rationality structures.

One important implication of Habermas's view of communicative interaction is the way in which values regulate social processes. They are to be realised as qualities of the processes themselves rather than as the quantifiable end-states of such processes. The fact that 'making an assertion' fails to produce a state of conviction in the hearer is not a reason for concluding that one should not have made it. What justifies the act is that it constitutes in itself the realisation of an obligation to speak the truth. Similarly, the fact that one's advice is ignored by another is irrelevant to an evaluation of the act of 'giving advice'. What is relevant is whether it was nevertheless 'good advice'; whether it expressed a correct understanding of what would benefit the other.

From a communicative interaction prespective the improvement of social processes is a problem of improving one's practical knowledge of how to translate values into action in particular concrete social situations. This value laden practical knowledge is very different from the technical knowledge which informs the purposive-rational actions posited in systems models of social processes.

Habermas is well aware that people's conceptions of values, the rules they employ to translate values into practice, change over time, and indeed may vary according to their group allegiances.

> "The rules of interpretation (for translating social norms into individual motives) are not part of the invariant life-equipment of individuals or groups. They constantly change with the structure of the life-world, sometimes in unnoticeable, continuous shifts, sometimes in a disconnected and revolutionary manner ... They are not ultimates ..." (1970) (Cited by McCarthy 1978, Ch. 3.2)

He therefore has to face the problem of objectivity posed by the contingent relativity of social norms (see 1973). Communicative interaction usually flows smoothly and freely between human beings when people's practical judgements clearly conform to shared interpretative rules. But communication breaksdown when the latter are no longer shared and judgements about the validity of actions become matters of dispute. For Habermas, an objective or rational consensus can be established through practical discourse or argumentation.

He argues that the possibility of an objective resolution is always presupposed in any discussion where one person is trying to convince the other of the rightness of their actions. And this presupposition can be transcendentally validated on the grounds that anyone who tries to convince another through practical discourse that practical discourse cannot objectively resolve questions about the rightness or wrongness of human activities contradicts themselves (see 1976b).

But in the absence of shared interpretative rules how can the better or most objective argument be determined. Habermas's quest for an objective way of determining the validity of communicative actions was partly developed as a response to Gadamer's theory of hermeneutic interpretation (1975). Habermas (1970) accepted Gadamer's view that interpretative rules are embodied in human traditions which change and evolve over time. But he was reluctant to accept Gadamer's conclusion that there is no procedure which can universally validate interpretative rules and thereby transcend historically determined traditions of practice.

Habermas 'resolved' his problem in terms of the formal properties of dialogue. Dialogue, he argued, presupposes an absence of all constraints on people's thinking and reasoning save that of 'the force of the better argument'. Participants must have equal opportunities to adopt dialogue roles and in particular equal freedom 'to put forward, call into question, and give reasons for and against statements, explanations, interpretations and justifications'. Dialogue therefore presupposes the liberal-democratic values of 'equality', 'freedom', and 'justice'. The presence of these conditions ensures that any consensus achieved will be a warranted one. Any consensus which stems from constraints on free and open dialogue will be a distorted one; manipulated for purposes of ideological control over people's practices.

In this way, Habermas claims to have explicated a procedure for determining the objectivity of practical judgements. He acknowledges that open and free practical discourse is an 'ideal speech situation' which can only be approximated to in practice. In the real world discourse is always to some extent distorted or biased by asymmetrical power relations between participants. But one can make progress towards the ideal situation by identifying and coping with negative instances of distorted discourse.

Habermas's reconstruction of the interpretative model, if valid, undermines the doctrine of theoretical reasoning outlined in the first section and the conception of objectivity which underpins it. This is because it explains how subjective meanings - the interpretations and judgements of social situations which are reflected in social action - can be objectively assessed without falling back on the empiricist assumption that objective inquiry can only focus on observable and measurable entities which exist externally to the human mind.

A reconstructed interpretative paradigm shows how a moral science of social processes is possible. Inasmuch as they are objectively assessible, subjective meanings can be viewed as practical theories which underlie and guide social action. The aim of a moral science would be the improvement of social processes, through the development of practitioners' practical theories. From the standpoint of this aim there is no need to add a second-order level of social science theorising. Such a moral science would be practitioner-based and characterised by an absence of a division of labour between practitioners and researchers. External researchers would work as partners with practitioners

in collaborative investigations. Rather than facilitating bureaucratic control over social processes the effective employment of this paradigm would increase the capacity of practitioners to autonomously improve the social processes they are engaged in.

Even if Habermas's view that the universal validity of practical judgements can be determined through practical discourse is an invalid one, Gadamer's theory of hermeneutic interpretation still leaves room for the idea of an objective, yet practically orientated, science.

He argues (1975) that every act of interpretation, whether it be of a linguistic text or some other situation, involves bringing our fore-conceptions or prejudgements to bear on the evidence. But this is a condition, rather than a barrier, to understanding. The danger lies in the workings of unconscious bias, since this prevents us from being open to another's 'meanings'. Once we are aware of them we can control them to establish a dialectical relationship with the situation. The meanings which emerge as a result lie neither 'objectively' in the evidence or subjectively in the pre-judgements brought to bear on it. They emerge from within the dialectical process itself. Thus the development of understanding is a working out of, and extension of, one's own prejudices in relation to a situation.

The value of discourse in this context lies in its capacity to make people aware of their unconscious biases by presenting them with alternative interpretations of the same situation. Rival 'projects' emerge side by side to be 'worked out' in relation to the evidence. This leads to the original prejudices being replaced by new interpretations which are in turn examined against the evidence and so on. The best interpretation is simply the one which accommodates all the evidence available. Gadamer claims that "The only 'objectivity' here is the confirmation of a fore-meaning in its being worked out". Yet this experience of an extension of the understanding under conditions of free and open dialogue can surely be considered to possess qualities of what we would normally call 'objectivity'. It may not involve the elimination of bias, but what is important for objectivity is freedom from the constraints biases can impose on being open to a situation. And such constraints stem from unconscious biases which prevent us from entertaining alternative interpretations. The development of an initial interpretation of a situation through dialogue with alternative viewpoints is surely an indication that one is open to the evidence and relatively free from the workings of unconscious bias.

It is still possible to conceive of a moral science of social processes which aims to test and develop the practical theories of those engaged in them, without having necessarily to accept Habermas's view that the universal validity of practical judgements can be demonstrated in practical discourse. If we accept Gadamer's theory of interpretation we can both recognise the historically situated nature of practical judgements and claim the possibility of objectively assessing them through practical discourse.

In my view what is now called educational action-research constitutes the concrete expression of a reconstructed interpretative paradigm with respect to the study of schooling. The action-research model of educational inquiry was to my knowledge first fully articulated in the U.K. by Lawrence Stenhouse in connection with the Schools Council Humanities Project. This project (Stenhouse 1970) could easily be interpreted as an attempt by Stenhouse to establish an 'interpretative science' of social situations as an important element of the secondary school curriculum. From the aim of helping adolescents to develop an understanding of human acts, social situations, and the controversial

value issues they raised, Stenhouse derived a set of pedagogical principles specifying the teacher's responsibilities for establishing conditions of free and open dialogue about social evidence in the classroom.

I have attempted to explore the relationship between Stenhouse's and Gadamer's theories of understanding in another paper (see Elliott 1983). What is important to note here is that Stenhouse made a distinction between first and second order inquiry in the Humanities Project. The first order inquiry was the students' investigations facilitated by their teacher, while the second order inquiry was the teacher's investigation of his first-order role assisted by members of the project's central team. The aim of this second-order inquiry was to help teachers to improve their pedagogical practices by testing and developing their theories about how to realise the project's pedagogical values in the classroom processes they were responsible for. Such second-order action-research was guided by a process rather than a product model of education. The aim of 'developing understanding' was analysed into the discourse values it presupposed rather than into terminal learning objectives. It was then the teacher's task to translate these process values into action through action-research.

This generation of an alternative model of curricular processes to that of 'behavioural objectives', an embryonic systems approach, was quite deliberate (see, for example, Stenhouse 1970). After H.C.P. other educational action-research projects followed at the Centre for Applied Research in Education at the University of East Anglia (see, for example, Rudduck 1983). In the Ford Teaching Project, Clem Adelman and I (1976) developed triangulation procedures for collecting and analysing data about teaching processes in classrooms. Such procedures constituted an attempt to engage teachers in a form of practical discourse about the meanings implicit in their teaching acts. They involved the production and collection of accounts of classroom processes from the points of view of the teacher, the students, and an observer. The accounts were then compared and contrasted by the teacher in discussion with the other parties, and in the light of observable data captured in audio, and audio-visual recordings.

In the 'Teacher-Pupil Interaction and Quality of Learning Project', based at the Cambridge Institute of Education, we worked with teacher groups in ten schools looking at the practical problems of teaching for understanding. One central aspiration of the project was to secure widespread discussion of the practical problems and issues identified by the groups throughout their schools. In this connection, the central team of the project assisted senior staff acting as group co-ordinators to undertake a form of second-order action research into the problems of developing and institutionalising practical discourse in their schools.

In spite of the growth of bureaucratic intervention in the process of schooling at both national and local government levels, the action-research movement continues to grow within the U.K., stimulated by an increasing number of Advanced Diploma and Masters' courses in Higher Education which are based on interpretative research teachers carry out in their own schools. Indeed, the action-research movement is beginning to look very much like a counter-movement to the bureaucratisation process. If this is the case, we need an explanation for the simultaneous growth of systems and action-research models when the political context of schooling at the present time appears to favour the former rather than the latter. I will be suggesting later that Habermas's notion of a 'legitimation crisis' is illuminating in this respect.

However, according to Whitty (1981) the interpretative perspective of the C.A.R.E. group is particularly "ill-fitted to respond to the current wave of reactionary initiatives in the curriculum field". He claims that it rests on an over-optimistic view of teachers' capacities to effect change in schools because it disregards the political and economic context of schooling. We are accused of "bracketing out" these under consideration.

What appears for Whitty to be more fitted as a counter-movement is what he calls "contemporary work in the sociology of education" which faces the "crucial structural issues" the C.A.R.E. group have apparently exhibited "a collective refusal to address". So let's look at the paradigm which informs the kind of sociology of education he refers to.

5. Social Reproductionist Analysis

One of the reasons why Habermas rejected Gadamer's theory of hermeneutic interpretation, and instead attempted to find a universal basis for validating practical judgements, was the possibility that practical judgements are themselves ideological distortions of consciousness which enable the 'forces of domination' within society to control the citizenrys' activities. In which case the way people conceptualise values as a basis for practical judgement may simply serve to legitimate the reproduction of an unjust social order through their activities. Since communicative interaction can be 'ideologically distorted' by the structures of domination within the society, the practical judgements can only be objectively assessed from a universal perspective which transcends the cultural traditions in which social norms and world-views are encapsulated.

For reasons I will shortly explore, Habermas rejects the traditional Marxist view that cultural traditions are simply ideological super-structures which reflect the prevailing forces and relations of production in the economic sphere. Yet I would argue that this distinction between 'cultural superstructure' and 'economic basic structure' is presupposed by reproductionist analyses of schooling by such people as Bourdieu (1977), Apple (1979), and Sharp and Green (1975). It entails that changes in norms and world-views are in in some sense determined by changes in the economic order of society. The central presumptions of reproductionist analyses of schooling are (1) that its constituitive processes function to reproduce an unjust and inequitable economic order, (2) that this reproductive function is masked from teachers by its being mediated through norms which serve to legitimate the processes they are engaged in, and are in themselves reflections of economic structures. Thus although teachers see their practical judgements to be guided by valid educational theories (normative structures), they are unaware that these theories are themselves in some sense determined by structural constraints originating in the economic sphere.

I want to highlight three implications of this kind of analysis. Firstly, it implies that teachers' practical theories inevitably suffer from ideological bias. Secondly, that teachers are limited in their capacity to autonomously effect changes and improvements in their practice by testing and revising their practical theories through action-research. Thirdly, that the objective meaning of schooling processes can only be grasped from the theoretical perspective of a critical social science and not from the standpoint of practitioners. Thus the division of labour between specialist educational researchers, theorists and teachers is preserved, and grounded in something like the empiricist notion of objectivity I originally outlined. Reproductionist analyses in attempting to show how the

subjective meanings expressed in social action are biased by their economic functions and leave little room for the idea of objectively valid practical theories.

Now researchers operating with a 'reproductionist model' of schooling have argued that it does not imply simply a 'strict determinism' with respect to the relationship between cultural and economic structures. Thus Whitty criticises Denis Lawton (1975) for attributing to the reproductionists an over-crude view of the relationship betwen culture and the economic order. Whitty argues that over the last decade sociologists have been committed to an exploration of the complexity of these relations. Yet we only have to look at such an influential piece of research as Sharp and Green's study of 'teacher ideologies' to see signs of a fairly deterministic perspective being imposed on the data. Hargreaves (1978) has pointed out the presumption in their research that teachers are unaware of the nature and consequences of social constraints on their activities. He argues that in the writing up stage Sharp and Green recognised the possibility that the teachers studied might have been aware, but the original presumption at the data gathering stage that they were not, prevented them from making the necessary empirical checks. Rightly, in my view, Hargreaves claims that: "... only if teachers are not fully aware of the nature and consequences of the constraints, and demonstrably so, will their own structuralist account be enhanced ..."

In case I am accused of citing an untypical example from the 'reproductionist' paradigm it is worth citing Michael Apple's own critique (1981) of his earlier work on 'Ideology and the Curriculum': "What was now more obviously missing in my formulations at this time was an analysis that focused on contradictions, conflict, mediations and, especially resistances, as well as reproduction." Apple goes on to criticise the analyses of "a number of leftish scholars and educators": "By seeing schools as total reflections of an unequal 'labour market', a market where workers simply do what they are told and passively acquiesce to the norms and authority relations of the work-place, these analyses accept as empirically accurate the ideology of management."

Henry Giroux (1981) has also mounted a powerful critique of the reproductionist paradigm on the grounds that it leaves little room "... to explore the contradictions inherent in the schooling process or to analyse the tensions, rejection of values, and the deep disjunctions experienced by many students".

Now if, as Hargreaves suggests, teachers can become aware of the nature of the constraints on their actions, then it follows that they are in a position to assess for themselves the extent to which their practical theories are ideologically distorted. Since it is the ideological distortion of their interpretative schemes which legitimates constraints on their actions, the reflective identification of instances of distortions will inevitably lead to a revision of such schemes, and an increasing capacity to resist and overcome power constraints.

The identification of power constraints on teachers' activities is not precluded by the action-research model I outlined. Indeed, contrary to Whitty's claim, the C.A.R.E. group have never assumed that teachers were in fact autonomous. Its action-research approach was developed to counteract such power-coercive approaches to educational decision-making as the 'objectives model'. We did not assume that the process of schooling was not constrained by its political and economic context, but did assume that teachers

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could become aware of such constraints, and in doing so increase their capacity to devise strategies for overcoming them. Hargreaves' remarks about the assumptions regarding power underlying interpretative approaches to research articulate very nicely the presuppositions of the action-research paradigm.

> "Sl/phenomenology does not assume that man is 'absolutely free', whatever such a peculiar concept might mean, but rather assert that man is and experiences himself as both free (in some respects) and constrained (in some respects) ... The contrast is not so much between freedom and determinism, as between ... 'soft determinism' and 'hard determinism'."

The action-research paradigm incorporates 'soft' but not 'hard' determinism. Now if 'reproductionists' also want to claim that they are 'soft' rather than 'hard' determinists, I would suggest that in so doing they undermine the very assumptions which underpin their concept of 'social reproduction'. Once they move to a more interactional view of the relationship between interpretative schemes and wider political and economic structures, then in order to be consistent they should give up the concept as an analytic tool and embrace the action-research model of social analysis. But this would commit them to a view of educational research as a science which aims to improve schooling by helping teachers to test and revise their practical theories. On this view of educational research there is no room for a rigid division of labour between teachers and theorists, and no body of social science theory which can be logically demarcated from the practical theories teachers use to guide their practice.

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